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SEXUAL HARASSMENT



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EXPLANATION

Sexual harassment is unwanted, deliberate or repeated sexual behavior. Sexually suggestive objects, signs, magazines, or pictures may be sexual harassment as well. The person hearing, seeing, or being touched does not want this attention and is frequently uncomfortable and embarrassed.

Sexual harassment can also be a form of unlawful sex discrimination if there is a subtle or direct threat that a sexual or social relationship is part of your job or your higher educational performance. The threat can be about any part of your job; wages, promotions, references, working conditions or your educational performance...grades, honors, course work, or scholarships.

DEFINITIONS

The Illinois Human Rights Act defines sexual harassment:

- IN EMPLOYMENT, as any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when 1) submission to such conduct is either expressed or suggested, 2) submission or rejection of the conduct by an employee is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting that employee, or 3) such conduct interferes with the employee's job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

- IN HIGHER EDUCATION, any unwelcome

sexual advances or requests for sexual favors made by an executive, administrative staff or faculty member to a student, or any conduct of a sexual nature exhibited by such person(s) toward a student, when such conduct substantially interferes with the students' educational performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS

The Illinois Human Rights Act protects employees on the job and students in higher education from sexual harassment. The law is enforced by the Illinois Department of Human Rights. The most recent legislation enacted requires public contractors and bidders to have a written policy which states that sexual harassment is illegal, a legal definition of sexual harassment, a description of sexual harassment (including examples), and the vendor's internal procedures for investigation of complaints, including penalties.

YOUR FEELINGS

It is normal to feel embarrassed and angry by unwanted, unflattering attention or demands. Often, sexual harassers think they will be protected by your normal reactions. Usually they think you will remain quiet to avoid embarrassment. This need not happen because today people do talk about many subjects that would not have been mentioned in years past.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY HARASSED...

- Let the harasser know that you are offended by this conduct and want it to stop.
- If a second incident occurs, let the person know politely and firmly that you are not interested. Do not worry about being subtle.
- Write down what happened to you, when it happened, who was there, and what was said by all the parties involved. Keep records of subtle or overt job or educational related promises or threats.
- Consider writing a letter to the harasser stating the facts and asking him or her to stop. Indicate that a copy of the letter will be sent to a responsible supervisor.
- Talk with other people in the department whom you trust. Often, the person who is harassing you may also be bothering others as well. These witnesses may also be willing to testify to the facts.
- Though not necessary, it would be a good idea to give your supervisor the facts about the incidents. If the supervisor is the sexual harasser, see his or her supervisor, and talk with the affirmative action officer and/or your academic advisor.

FACTS TO BE AWARE OF...

Both males and females can be victims of sexual harassment.

The victim of sexual harassment and the harasser can be members of the opposite sex or of the same sex,

Sexual harassment in an employment setting can be perpetrated by a supervisor, co-worker, or someone on the business premises with the employer's permission or at the invitation of the employer.

Sexual harassment can occur off business premises if the activity is related to the employment, i.e., a company picnic, dinner, etc.

Sexual harassment is not limited to any employment level. Both harasser and victims can be found in all areas of the workplace.

Charges of sexual harassment can be filed against the individual harasser and the employer. Both parties can be found liable.



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WHERE TO GO FOR HELP...

Illinois Department of Human Rights

100 West Randolph Street
Suite 10-100
Chicago, Illinois 60601
(312) 814-6200
(312) 263-1579 TDD

222 South College
Room 101
Springfield, Illinois 62706
(217) 785-5100
(217) 785-5125 TDD

A charge of sexual harassment must be filed with the Department within 180 days of the date you believe the harassment took place, even if you are using union or internal grievance procedures to solve the problem.